UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/36
15 January 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 15 JANUARY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you in the annex below the relevant clarifications which the Government of Burundi is providing to the Security Council through its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation on:

1. The noticeable improvement of security in Burundi;

2. The growing alliance between the forces of order and the population in their joint fight against the common enemy, namely, the terrorists who are wreaking havoc upon an innocent people;

3. The massive return of the population driven earlier into internal and external exile by armed bands;

4. A trenchant refutation of the false allegations by some humanitarian organizations, more specifically Amnesty International, concerning the massacres that it tendentiously attributed to the security forces of Burundi;

5. The real situation, in which the victims whose cause was taken up by Amnesty International and some other humanitarian groups, were merely assailants disguised as refugees and their concealed accomplices, who were neutralized by the forces of order which came to the assistance of the civilian population under attack;

6. The severity of the sanctions, both military and legal, imposed on some elements of the army of Burundi that are guilty of isolated cases of extortion in some towns in the country;

7. The repeated request made by the Government of Burundi to the United Nations in order to obtain international observers for the purpose of shedding new light on the authenticity of the facts;

8. The commitment reaffirmed by the new regime to negotiate with all the parties to the conflict, the determination reflected by the sending of the

ministerial delegation for this purpose last December to Arusha, to the former President of the Republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu J. Nyerere;

9. The devastating impact of the economic embargo on the entire innocent people of Burundi and the enormous obstacles caused by these measures to the negotiations and the peace process and, therefore, the urgent need to lift the embargo as speedily as possible, as several recent summit meetings have called for;

10. The beginning, at the end of January 1997, of the national debate on the restoration of peace and national reconciliation.

The Government of Burundi would be very grateful if you would have this statement distributed to the Security Council as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Nsanze TERENCE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 15 January 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burundi addressed to the President of the Security Council

As you know, in a recent communication addressed to your predecessor, I informed the members of the Security Council about the important decisions and recommendations adopted respectively during the summit meetings in Rome on food, in Brazzaville on security in Central Africa, and in Ouagadougou, where the heads of State of Africa and France met. During these summits, it was generally recognized that there was an urgent need to lift the illegal and inhuman embargo imposed on the people of Burundi and to encourage the Government of Burundi to commit itself, in particular, to the process of dialogue and reconciliation with all the citizens of Burundi.

Today, I should like to report on the current situation, which is developing in a positive way in my country. For several weeks, there has been a noticeable improvement in security, mainly in the capital and urban centres. In the interior of the country, the population is collaborating more effectively with the local government and the forces of order in combating the terrorists and their armed bands. There is also a massive return, throughout the country, of the population groups which had been deceived or taken hostage by the armed rebels.

Nevertheless, there are still cases in which terrorists blindly massacre, as usual, the innocent civilian population. These attacks have been made possible and have been encouraged by the embargo, which deprives the State of the means that are essential for defending and protecting its citizens.

With respect to the refugees who are returning from neighbouring countries, particularly Zaire, after the events in Kivu, the Government of Burundi has made all the arrangements to receive them and resettle them in their regions of origin, on their property or in temporary sites when security is not yet completely guaranteed in those regions.

Some human rights organizations, particularly Amnesty International, have recently reported allegations that repatriated persons had been executed by the security forces of Burundi in or around certain churches in the country.

The fact of the matter is that some of these repatriated persons are returning with arms along the border with Zaire under the cover of the repatriation movement and are coming up against the firm attitude of the forces of order, whose main mission is to protect the population. Other refugees have preferred to travel with arms and baggage to the Republic of Tanzania, from where they destabilize Burundi, particularly through murderous incursions carried out against the innocent civilian population. It must nevertheless be acknowledged that certain unfortunate mistakes were committed in the towns of Murambi, Kizuka and, most recently, Kobero.

The Government deplores these cases and has ordered investigations to be conducted in order to establish the responsibility for such acts. Some members of the forces of order who have been deemed responsible for those crimes have been arrested and are awaiting trial. The concern with regard to the situation of the refugees cannot overshadow an agonizing everyday tragedy: the armed terrorists, committing massacres of innocent people even during the period of the rebellion by the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD), had deceived the international community by declaring a fictitious truce.

Furthermore, with regard to the allegations by Amnesty International concerning the so-called massacre of innocent persons by the forces of order in a church in Butaganzwa, the truth of the matter is that these forces, in collaboration with the local government officials and the surrounding population, launched an operation to free citizens of Burundi taken hostage by the rebels and the latter were annihilated. It is not a question therefore of innocent civilians who had been killed, as claimed by that organization, which was deceived by informants acting in bad faith. In all these cases, the Government of Burundi asked for international observers to be sent to our country in order to establish the facts. It urgently reiterates the same request.

With regard to the "rounding up of population groups", another argument recently put forward by certain circles in order to maintain the embargo, we must remember that these round-ups were caused, in October 1993, by the acts of genocide. In this way, centres of "displaced persons" came about in an almost spontaneous manner. More recently, round-ups of population groups in conflict with armed groups have been carried out in order to protect the lives of innocent citizens during military operations. The Government will spare no effort to help these people to continue agricultural activities enabling them to ensure their own subsistence and resettle in their villages as soon as possible. Greater humanitarian assistance would make it possible to improve the living conditions of these groups in difficult circumstances.

With respect to the question of the negotiations, I should like once again to reaffirm, through this letter, the determination of the Government of Burundi to conduct frank negotiations with all the parties involved in the conflict in Burundi, including the armed factions. The Government has already in fact officially indicated the various stages of the peace process. Quite recently, the Government of Burundi replied to the invitation by the Facilitator, the former Tanzanian President, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, to whom it reiterated the commitment to carry out fully the process of negotiations, while at the same time indicating the obstacles and constraints linked to the embargo, which is unjustly and harshly affecting the people of Burundi and impeding chances for a return to peace through calm negotiation.

The other stage in the search for peace through dialogue is the organization of the national debate, which is to begin at the end of January 1997.

The three stages in the dialogue indicated at the summit of the heads of State of the region last October have thus been perfectly initiated. No other

pretext should be invoked any longer to maintain the economic embargo, which is gradually stifling the peace process and strangling the people of Burundi.

In view of the improvement in the field of security and the determination of the Government of Burundi to carry out its peace programme and in light of the recommendations by the various summits, including that of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, we once again request the Security Council to use its prerogatives to lift the embargo against Burundi immediately in order to promote the negotiation process and the return to peace.

(Signed) Dr. Luc RUKINGAMA
Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Cooperation